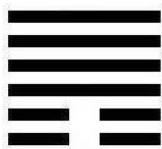


Hexagram 33 – Retreat



Retreat

Spiritual influence nourishing all.

Small offerings benefit.

Structure:

- Heaven ☰ rises above the unmoving mountain ☶.
- Lower trigram keeps still, hampering the retreat. The upper trigram has strong movement, retreating freely and unhampered.
- The two bottom weak lines show the harmful forces advancing toward the retreating strong lines.

The hexagram marks the 6th month of the Chinese calendar (July-August), when the forces of winter already show their influence in the days growing noticeably shorter. When darkness approaches, the light naturally retreats to security.

Life evolves within the natural rhythm of day and night, the transition of the seasons, phases of the moon and tides. All life follows natural rhythms, growing toward what benefits and retreating from what harms. Life retreats beyond the reach of what harms to survive until conditions improve, and it can flourish again.

The wise apply this natural law to the world and respond to advancing harm by retreating from it. The sage knows the great harms that organized greed and violence can inflict on life and withdraws from such an overpowering danger to preserve its path and clarity.

Retreating from inevitable dangers avoids the futility of resisting what lies beyond our capacities to change. The wise do not consider such a retreat the forced flight of the weak but the voluntary and strategic withdrawal of the strong, who do not exhaust their strength by resisting what they cannot overcome. They know when to retreat to avoid being drawn into a futile struggle.

Understanding the means of a constructive retreat requires discernment. The wise do not abandon the field to an advancing destructive force. In such times, sages remain correct but not self-righteous. They do not force anything nor advance great matters but show perseverance by following the ways of wholeness.¹ By showing their strength in single acts of resistance, they slow down the harmful advance and may even bring it to a standstill.

¹ **Ways of Wholeness:** Sages relate to all their sacred Earth Interbeing relations with love and care, serving the well-being of all. Sages know the sacred within all their interactions and situations and open to the loving path through problems and dangers. Sages live within Earth and moral limits to sustain the sacred balance and harmony, reciprocate for the gifts they receive from the Earth Interbeing, and hold themselves accountable for their actions. Sages take responsibility for their own wholeness and fulfill their responsibilities to the wholeness of Earth Interbeing, creating opportunities for others to do the same.

The wisdom of retreating applies to the inner path as well. Sages recognize the moment when self-cherishing and hostile feelings for others activate. They gently withdraw from these situations and turn toward the wholeness of the Earth Interbeing. A timely constructive inward retreat succeeds in preserving the path while preparing the conditions for an advance when the times have changed.

Line 1: The weak line has the most exposure to advancing destructive forces. By not acting rashly and drawing attention to itself, the line survives.

Line 2: While the strong lines retreat and destructive forces press after them, this weak line holds on so tightly to the principles of wholeness that it succeeds in escaping from what would harm it.

Line 3: Entanglements with the clinging lower lines hamper this line's retreat from what harms, which increases its danger. Entangled with inner afflictions, the line transforms its difficulties into what furthers wholeness.

Line 4: When the situation calls for retreat from what harms, the wise willingly put aside personal preferences and retreat. In this way, they overcome their attachments to what harms and return to the ways of wholeness. The unwise lack the strength to resist indulging their self-cherishing and hostility for others, which obstructs distancing themselves from complicity in what harms.

Line 5: The sage recognizes the right time for retreat from a situation has come and carries out the retreat in a friendly manner. Irrelevant considerations do not lead the line astray because it has made a firm decision. With an unwavering will, the line perseveres what it must do.

Line 6: The line clearly sees what it must do to restore and preserve the balance and harmony of Earth Interbeing and carries out its decision without difficulty.